



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1376.0 - Local Government and ABS (Newsletter), Sept 2006

Previous ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 10/10/2006

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### About this newsletter

Local Government and ABS is a quarterly newsletter created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) aimed at helping the Local Government Sector use statistics to assist with planning and other community servicing decisions.

This is a free newsletter and we encourage you to forward it to others and post it on your bulletin board. Anyone is welcome to receive Local Government and ABS - for further details on how to subscribe see 'Newsletter contact details'.

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### National Regional Profile - new release, new features

The latest version of the National Regional Profile (NRP) was released on 21 September 2006 to the ABS website.

People and organisations who need a snapshot of their local region now have access to more information at the click of a button. Information is available for Local Government Areas, Statistical Local Areas, Statistical Subdivisions, Statistical Divisions, States/Territories and Australia.

The NRP is an easy to use self-help facility that allows users to find their desired region from a map or pick-list and then view or download information for that region. The NRP was developed in response to requests for more accessible information about regions and was first released in 2004.

There are a number of changes in the new NRP release that significantly enhance content and functionality for users, including choices of summary or more detailed data, and the expansion of the data being made available.

New features: The NRP now caters for users who want a brief snapshot of their region, those who want more detailed regional data, and those who want to compare regions. There are now:

1. Summary web pages for regions - four web pages of data available under the topic headings of Economy, Population/People, Industry and Environment/Energy. (This is a new feature). Users will be able to view one region at a time with this feature.

2. Excel spreadsheets for regions under the Detail tab - more detailed data, including all the data in the Summary pages plus other state/territory data where it is available. Users will be able to view or download one region at a time with this feature.

3. SuperTABLE datacubes - these contain the same information as in the Excel spreadsheets, but for many regions. These datacubes will be in a separate set of pages linked to the Summary page of all regions. (This a new feature). Data cubes will allow users to view/download data for many regions. For example, there will be a SuperTABLE data cube containing Local Government Areas in Australia with all the data items that can be compared across all regions. Users will be able to view or extract data for any number of regions for analysis.

New content: The NRP now includes:

- Local Government Finance
  - Indigenous population estimates
  - Some 2001 Census data
- persons born overseas
  - persons speaking a language other than English
  - qualifications
  - occupation
  - families
  - households

The National Regional Profile can be accessed from the 'Regional Statistics' links on the ABS home page. Users can select a region by name or drill-down to the area they want using maps.

For further information please contact Andrea Woods by phone on (08) 8237 7350 or by email [andrea.woods@abs.gov.au](mailto:andrea.woods@abs.gov.au).

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## **Use of Information Technology on Farms**

There is new data about the use of information technology (Computer or Internet) on farms for 2004-05 in the publication:

### **Use of Information Technology on Farms, Australia (cat. no. 8150.0)**

Among the main features are:

Of the 129,934 farms in Australia in 2004-05, with an estimated value of agricultural operations (EVAO) of \$5,000 or more:

56% used a computer as part of their business operations, an increase of 1 percentage point since 2003-04; and

53% used the Internet as part of their business operations, an increase of 6 percentage points since 2003-04.

At the regional level (Statistical Division), the proportion of farms using a computer as part of their business operations varied from 77% in the South Eastern region of Western Australia to 39% in the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. The same areas recorded the highest and lowest proportions of farms using the Internet. The proportions ranged from 79% in the South Eastern region of Western Australia to 38% in the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales.

For the first time in 2004-05 a question on the main type of Internet connection used was asked on the Agricultural Survey. Of those farms using the Internet, the majority of them identified they have a dial-up connection (43,020 farms). 12,287 farms identified they have a broadband connection and 8,565 farms identified they have an ISDN connection to the Internet.

For further information please contact Tim Landrigan in the ABS Perth Office on (08) 9360 5104, or by email [tim.landrigan@abs.gov.au](mailto:tim.landrigan@abs.gov.au)

## Preview of 2006 Census products

A range of new and exciting products are being developed for the 2006 Census. The way Census data is accessed will also change. To show you what's happening, ABS has re-released some 2001 Census Data in this new format.

## Other Recent ABS releases

Proposed Methodology for Producing Regional Water Use Estimates, 2004-05 (cat no. 4610.0.55.001)

In recent times, demand for water use data at lower geographic levels than state/territory estimates has increased. As water issues are often localised in nature, the development of a regional methodology and associated output will help meet this demand. This paper proposes a methodology for estimating total water use at the Australian water management area level. The ABS intends to use the methodology described here to produce estimates of total water use for up to 200 WMAs. The results from applying the methodology will be reported in 2004-05 Regional Estimates of Total Water Use, Australia (cat. no. 4610.0.55.002), which will be released in mid-December 2006. The final methodology used to produce the regional total water use estimates will be released as explanatory notes to this publication.

Queensland Key Statistics, Sep 2006 (cat. no. 1388.3)

State and Regional Indicators, Victoria, June 2006 (cat. no. 1367.2)

## What's happening in ABS Local Government Finance?

### Collections

During the September quarter, electronic forms for the **annual** data collection, conducted cooperatively by the ABS and the Department of Local Government (DLG) and/or Local Government Grants Commission (GC) in each state and Northern Territory, were despatched for a number of jurisdictions. Forms for councils in the remaining jurisdictions are soon to follow. This year the ABS has asked Department of Local Government (DLG) and/or Local Government Grants Commissions (GC) to increase the purpose splits for Recreation and Culture items. The ABS is hoping to reduce the provider load placed on Councils by trying to collect further Recreation and Culture data through this medium and therefore ensuring the councils are not required to complete a separate survey form for this collection each year. It is envisaged that more data will be collected in this way in the future eg. environment, therefore reducing the burden placed on Councils. Return dates differ between jurisdictions, with some seeking information as early as mid-October and others due by the end of November. Returning forms earlier than the due date will greatly assist both the DLG/GC and the ABS to achieve their data processing schedules.

The ABS also conducts a **quarterly** survey of financial information which was despatched to a selected sample of councils in the third week of September. Four changes have been made to the form which will improve reporting by councils and which will enhance the data provided to the National Accounts.

- The splitting of Non-financial assets in the Statement of Financial Performance. By only obtaining gains in the Revenue sheet and Losses in the Expenses sheet, this will avoid any confusion about the values for this data item.
- Moving of Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) from Non-employee related expenses to Non-capitalised employee expenses - Other employee expenses. The change brings the data into alignment with National Accounts as FBT is now to be treated as a tax on individuals rather than a tax on employers.

- To ensure that councils do not include bad and doubtful debts on their form, we have included new notes on the "Please read this first box" and the "Excluding box" for Non-employee related expenses.
- Amendments to the definitions for "Non-employee related expenses and "Other employee expenses". These changes will help respondents fill in the form.

Responses to the quarterly survey are required by **10 October 2005** (6 working days after the end of the quarter). Early attention to getting the forms to the ABS will ensure that the financial activity of local government is accurately represented in Australia's National Accounts.

### **Other Developments in ABS Local Government Finance**

Over the last few months there have been several changes to ABS Local Government Finance staffing. The new Director for Local Government is Sally Pritchard.

Michaela McGuigan (a long time member of the Local Government Team) has moved to ABS Indigenous Statistics Units. Andrew Cumpsty replaced Michaela in the Local Government team after spending the last five years working in Social and Demographics Branch.

Geri Eynstone-Hinkins has been moved off-line and is currently working on the re-engineering of Local Government systems and processes.

### **Contacts**

Director: Sally Pritchard [[sally.pritchard@abs.gov.au](mailto:sally.pritchard@abs.gov.au)] (07) 3222 6310

Assistant Director: Peter Ball [[peter.ball@abs.gov.au](mailto:peter.ball@abs.gov.au)] (07) 3222 6404

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### **Redistributing ABS data now made simpler**

The ABS has recently implemented changes to policies regarding the distribution of ABS data. These changes simplify the process and, for some types of on-provision, licence fees and royalties have been removed.

- **Distribution of ABS data that is available free of charge on [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)**

Under these new policies any individual or organisation can reproduce material that is available free of charge from the ABS web site without paying licence fees or royalties. Up to 500 data items (individual cells of data) may be reproduced without the need to seek permission. We do ask that you source the data to the ABS quoting the catalogue number, collection name and reference period. If you wish to reproduce more than 500 data items you will need to enter into a licensing agreement with the ABS. This agreement is cost free and can be obtained by emailing [intermediary.management@abs.gov.au](mailto:intermediary.management@abs.gov.au).

- **Distribution of ABS data on a non-charging, public access web site**

If you wish to place either data available free of charge, or data you have purchased from the ABS, or a combination of both types on a non charging publicly accessible web site you can do so without payment of licence fees or royalties. If you wish to place more than 500 data items on such a web site you will need to enter into a licensing agreement with the ABS. This agreement is cost free and can be obtained by emailing [intermediary.management@abs.gov.au](mailto:intermediary.management@abs.gov.au). All data must be sourced to the ABS and we ask that you also provide a link to the ABS web site if appropriate. As the ABS logo is not available for external use we have developed an icon for those individuals or organisations wishing to link to the ABS web site. This icon can be obtained by emailing to the address provided above.

- **Distribution of purchased ABS data other than on a non-charging, public access web site**

If you wish to on-provide data that you have purchased from the ABS in your products or services then you may need to enter into a licence agreement with the ABS. If your output (product or service) contains 10% or more ABS intellectual property then you will need to become a licensed secondary distributor. This type of licence does incur a licence fee which is currently \$3,500 per annum and subject to review and change each year. This licence can be obtained by emailing [intermediary.management@abs.gov.au](mailto:intermediary.management@abs.gov.au).

In all instances where purchased ABS data is on-provided it must be obtained at the ABS price applicable at the time of purchase.

Any inquiries relating to distribution of ABS data, copyright or intellectual property matters should be addressed to [intermediary.management@abs.gov.au](mailto:intermediary.management@abs.gov.au) or contact Colleen Tharme on telephone 02 6252 6998.

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## **Australian Population Association - biennial conference**

The 13th biennial conference of the Australian Population Association will be held in Adelaide from 5-8 December 2006.

With the theme "Population, Policy and Australia's Destiny", the conference is the showcase for demographers, population geographers, policy makers and planners to discuss contemporary issues relating to population studies.

Information on the conference can be found from the link at <http://www.apa.org.au>.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is one of the sponsors of the conference.

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## **Newsletter contact details**

This newsletter is one way to help improve communication between the ABS and the Local Government Sector. New ABS initiatives to assist local government organisations will be announced in this newsletter as they evolve. We would like your views and suggestions about this newsletter so that it remains useful and assists you to understand and use ABS statistics. Please email comments to [andrea.woods@abs.gov.au](mailto:andrea.woods@abs.gov.au), or by telephone on (08) 8237 7350.

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- Select **News and Media** from the main menu at the top or bottom of the screen.
- At the next page choose **ABS Newsletters**.
- Then choose the appropriate edition under **Local Government and ABS**.

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This page last updated 4 April 2007

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